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Graduate Connections



University of Nebraska–Lincoln

A Newsletter for UNL Graduate Students published by the Office of Graduate Studies

February 2008

Navigating Graduate School

Events, advice and strategies to help you succeed in Graduate School at UNL

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THE DISSERTATION PRESENTATION

The capstone experience—the most important action you'll take as a doctoral student—is the oral defense of your dissertation, commonly referred to as the oral examination or the dissertation defense. The purpose of the defense is to share the results of your research and demonstrate to your graduate committee and the academic community that you've completed independent, original and significant research.

For some, just thinking about the dissertation defense can be a high-anxiety event, because, according to Dr. S. Joseph Levine of Michigan State University, "It seems to suggest some sort of war that you're trying to win." Instead, Dr. Elizabeth Augustina Reyes, writing online for the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students, suggests reframing the experience as an opportunity to present research, making it a dissertation *presentation* as opposed to a dissertation *defense*.

The important thing to remember is that, when it comes to your subject, you are clearly the most knowledgeable person at this meeting. The members of your committee are there to hear from you and to help you better understand the research in which you have invested so much of yourself during the previous months. Their purpose is to help you finish your degree requirements, and your defense is ultimately the final "test" before you're awarded the doctoral degree.

Presentation format

Although the format of the dissertation presentation varies from department to department and discipline to discipline, the basic structure is the same: You (the doctoral candidate) and your committee members will attend. In some instances, external readers, if there are any, may attend. The dissertation presentation may be open to other members of the academic or professional community

(for example, department or program faculty members, graduate students) and, in some cases, family members. Most often, only the presentation and question-answer sessions are open; individuals who are not members of the official committee are excluded from other portions of the defense.

Generally speaking, the dissertation presentation lasts about 1½ - 2 hours, after which you'll be asked to leave the room for about 10-15 minutes while the committee discusses the merit of your work. You will then be asked to rejoin them in the room, where they generally greet you with, "Congratulations, Doctor."

Tips for preparing for your dissertation presentation

The structure and process of the dissertation presentation varies widely across programs so it's important to talk with your chair and other students to find out what is expected. But here are a few suggestions from Dr. Augustina Reyes, Dr. Levine and others for planning and preparing the dissertation presentation.

Try and make the presentation more of a team effort. Meet with your major adviser ahead of time and discuss the strategy you should use at the defense. Ask about the structure and format of the dissertation presentation. Is it formal or informal? How much time will you have? Who will be there? Identify any possible problems that may occur and discuss ways to deal with them.

Plan an educational presentation. In general, it's best to plan a 10-15 minute presentation that reviews your entire study. This time frame may appear brief, but when you consider the interruptions and questions, your presentation will easily expand to a two-hour discussion. Dr. April Seifert, who received her Ph.D. in psychology from UNL in December 2007, noted that her defense "was supposed to be a 10-15 minute formal presentation of my findings followed by a question and answer/discussion. ... I made it about 3 slides into my presentation, and my committee started asking me questions. We slowly worked our way through the rest of my slides, and then moved on to more questions/ discussion."

If it's a formal presentation, Power Point instead of overheads is highly encouraged. If formality is more relaxed, Dr. Levine suggests creating posters or charts that illustrate your major points and posting them around the room. You can use the posters as guideposts and, unlike Power Point slides or

overheads, they remain visible to your audience throughout the presentation.

Organize the presentation logically. Create an outline, focusing on the results and discussion sections of the dissertation. It's not necessary to include the literature review to set up the presentation. The committee is more interested in hearing about your work. If any committee members are unfamiliar with the research topic, however, you might consider including brief background information for their benefit. Again, talk to your adviser.

Start by reviewing the research questions and the instruments and analyses used. Remind the audience about the relevance of the research questions and/or lack of current research on the topic.

Get straight to the point and present the findings. Make it short and sweet: "Regular sleep was positively related to a good mood," and present the data to support your conclusions.

Stick to what you know. It's not necessary to have an overhead for every point you want to make or to present *all* your findings. Just as your discussion highlights some results more than others, the presentation should focus on the more interesting findings, as well. Remember that whatever you present, either in overheads or orally, you are opening yourself up to questioning.

Plan for some discussion and some questions.

During your presentation it's likely your committee will spend some time arguing—or discussing—points with each other. Faculty members tend to focus their questions on the basic issues of the research. Why was the research worth doing? What, if anything, surprised you in the research? What was the most difficult part of the research study? What are the practical implications of the research? What are the theoretical implications? What about future directions? What would you do differently if you had to do it again? It's important to think through these and other questions related to your research results.

Dr. Seifert's committee asked her a variety of questions, falling into these general categories:

- why she made certain research design decisions or used particular statistical methods (Dr. Seifert's recommendation: be ready to cite people who have successfully used similar procedures in the past)

- what her results meant for the theories she used to formulate her hypotheses (Think about these possibilities and make some hidden slides in case such questions come up)
- what her results meant for related theories she hadn't really used to formulate her specific study, but might benefit from her results (It really helps to think about the research areas of your committee members)

Be careful not to come across as “defensive” at your defense.

Remember that the committee members bring a new perspective and may have some very good thoughts to share, even if you don't agree with them. Dr. Levine suggests responding to new input by saying something like “Thank you so much for your idea. I will give it careful consideration.” You haven't backed yourself or the committee member into a corner. And you've not promised anything. Try to be politically astute at this time. Don't forget that your ultimate goal is to successfully complete your degree.

Prepare in a variety of ways. April Seifert suggests reading your own paper. Sounds like a given, but doing so will refresh your memory of your original arguments and thought process as you conceptualized your study. “After I read it,” April says, “I was pleasantly surprised to see that I had actually made a pretty cohesive argument!”

And, says Dr. Seifert, “The other extremely helpful thing I did was spend the 3-4 days before my defense trying to tear apart my own study. I strategically thought about the people who would be in the room and the types of questions they would likely ask, in addition to what I, myself, would ask if I were reading the study.”

Also consider practicing with an audience ahead of time. Because you have probably been looking at this dissertation for a minimum of 243 light years, fresh eyes will ensure that you are making smooth transitions and a clear presentation. Practicing in the actual room in which you will be defending is highly advisable, especially if you will be able to test-run using Power Point, a laptop or other audio-visual aids.

Project professionalism. Dressing in formal attire will contribute to your credibility and perception as a future colleague.

Final thoughts about the dissertation presentation

The best examinations are those in which the candidate and the committee discuss—even debate—the theoretical, practical and methodological issues, where the student participates in the conversation as a peer. Dr. Augustina Reyes offers this reminder: You are the “expert”. Consider the many articles you've read and the time you've invested. In the midst of all the anxiety, it is easy to forget that you are the one who is most familiar with this information. If anything, the presentation is just another step in the transition to your professional identity as a colleague.

Also, your committee is there to listen and understand, not to test or trick you. Your committee wants you to do well. They agreed to be on your committee, didn't they? (And no, they didn't *have* to.) They've invested time and energy in your education as well. Professors are very busy

How's Your Connection?

You can read **Graduate Connections** on the Office of Graduate Studies web page, receive notification of the latest issue from your department, or have issues delivered directly to you via e-mail. To subscribe, send a message to gsapd2@unl.edu with [subscribe GC] in the subject line and your name and e-mail address in the body of the message.

We invite your feedback and comments about **Graduate Connections**. Can you use the kinds of information you find in this issue? What else can we include to help you make the right connections in the course of your graduate career? Are you engaged in research or other scholarly activity that you want to share with readers of **Graduate Connections**?

Please share your thoughts with us so we can bring you a relevant, lively and useful quarterly publication. Send e-mail to gsapd2@unl.edu.

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people, and chairs are not going to waste everyone's time by setting a date if you're not ready. If they let you set a date, they think you are ready to present your work.

In summary, the defense should be considered a presentation of your research and the opportunity to

benefit from your committee's input in order to improve your thesis. Give yourself credit as a colleague-in-the-making: after the two-hour presentation, a little document with the committee's signatures on it will be the most beautiful piece of paper you have *ever* seen.

Sources:

Augustina Reyes, Elizabeth (2008). The dissertation defense: Being well-defended in a good way. American Psychological Association of Graduate Students. <http://www.apa.org/apags/edtrain/disdefenseadvice.html>

Levine, S. Joseph (2007). Writing and presenting your thesis or dissertation. Learner Associates.net. <http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/#35>

Martin, R. (1980). *Writing and defending a thesis or dissertation in psychology and education*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Good Practices in Graduate Education

Advice and strategies to strengthen ethics in graduate education

HELPING STUDENTS AVOID PLAGIARISM

It's not always clear why students plagiarize. Maybe it's because they're feeling pressured to get good grades or they've procrastinated and the paper is due tomorrow. It might be because they don't understand the principles underlying academia or how to properly cite their references. Whatever the reason, students must understand that plagiarism is a serious breach of academic ethics and that there are consequences.

Here are some tips to help keep your students on the path to academic success/excellence:

- Make sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism. It can be a difficult term to define for students. There's word-for-word plagiarism, and most of us know that's wrong. A quotation without proper citation is also a clear-cut act of plagiarism. Paraphrasing someone else's words without citing the source is another common form of plagiarism. Buying a research paper from a paper mill—or a friend—is a form of plagiarism. Using an image from the web without citing the source is plagiarism. Plagiarism covers a wide spectrum from sloppy documentation to outright copying materials. Make sure you understand what

plagiarism is and that you can explain it to your students.

- Inform students of their responsibilities. Refer to UNL's Student Code of Conduct.
- Include a clear statement on academic honesty in your syllabus, along with the consequences if students are found guilty of plagiarizing. If you're not sure how to write such a statement, contact Dr. Richard Lombardo, TA Services, Office of Graduate Studies, for assistance.
- Model excellence. When you use images or refer to web sites, be sure you acknowledge the source and assistance from others.
- Provide examples. If you're asking students to write a research paper, show them how to cite appropriate references. The Office of Graduate Studies Academic Integrity web site provides examples of proper use of others' words and ideas.
- Benchmark your writing assignments. Break a research paper into parts and have students submit drafts. You'll get a sense for their writing ability and they won't feel pressured to cheat. It's a win-win situation!

Sources:

Wilhoit, S. (1994). Helping students avoid plagiarism, *College Teaching*, 42(2).

Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It, UNL Office of Graduate Studies. <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/plagiarism.shtml>

Teaching Tip

Identifying What You Consider Important

Undergraduates at times may feel overwhelmed by information and find themselves at a loss to determine the relative importance of various points you might make in the course of your teaching. Just saying an idea is important is not enough. You need to put the concept in some perspective to show why it is important. Doing so not only gets the students' attention, it gives them a framework on which to hang the idea.

One of the best ways to cue students to the importance of an idea is to show them the role it plays in their overall understanding of the course material or in applications beyond the course. Follow the introduction of a major concept with lots of specific examples, including anecdotes that show application of the concept in current professional practice.

You also might highlight major points by saying, 'This is more important than that.' For example, if you are giving a list of contributing factors to some phenomenon or event, identify which in your view are most significant.

It also helps if you differentiate between the most and least important ideas presented in a lecture. Tell students they don't have to memorize everything, but they might want to remember a particular point. Or identify a concept as something they will use so many times that it's worth paying special attention to.

Several teachers stress the need for repetition (using different words or examples) to communicate the most important points in their lectures.

Dramatic pauses are another way to highlight important ideas. You can reinforce the importance of a main point by pausing to get students' full attention and then saying emphatically, 'This is the really important consideration.' Then pause again to be sure they are prepared to write it down. If not, restate the importance of what is to follow.

Source: [A Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence](#)

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE TEACHING

1. Undergraduate courses should be carefully planned. Textbooks and other course materials must be ordered in time to be available for use by enrolled students. An adequate course syllabus must be prepared.
2. Important course details should be conveyed to enrolled students. Such details include office hours, policy on class attendance, changes in class meeting location or time, reading assignments, opportunities for extra credit, grading criteria for essay questions on examinations or papers and the instructor's policy on missed or make-up examinations.
3. New and revised lectures and course readings should reflect advancements of knowledge in a field (i.e., instructors must keep up to date with advancements of knowledge in their academic disciplines).
4. Grading of examinations and assignments should be based on merit and not on the characteristics of students. Personal friendships with students should not affect grades given them. Moreover, no students should be given preferential treatment in the application of policies about late work and incompletes and opportunities for extra credit to improve their grades.
5. Various perspectives on course topics should be presented, examinations should cover the breadth of the course, and scholars' or students' perspectives at variance with the instructor's point of view acknowledged.
6. Students should be treated with respect as individuals. Students must not be treated in a condescending and demeaning way. The needs and sensitivities of students should be respected.
7. Instructors must respect the confidentiality of their relationships with students and the students' academic achievements.
8. Instructors must make themselves available to students by maintaining office hours and being prepared for student advising, including being prepared to identify special services available for students with problems outside the expertise of the faculty member.
9. Instructors must not have sexual relationships with students enrolled in their classes. Instructors must also refrain from making sexual comments to students.
10. Instructors must not come to class intoxicated from alcohol or drugs.

Adapted from Braxton, J. M. & Bayer, A. E. (2004). Toward a code of conduct for undergraduate college teaching. In J. M. Braxton & A. E. Bayer (eds.) *Addressing faculty and student classroom improprieties*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 99, pp. 47-55.

Essential Connections

Critical information about the fundamentals of graduate study at UNL

GRADUATE STUDIES WEB SITE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Please check out [Taking Charge of Your Professional Development](#), a new framework you can use to help identify strategies that will prepare you for your future role as a faculty member or

professional practitioner. See more information on page 8 in the Professional Development Network section of this newsletter. The Web address is <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/takingcharge>.

2007-2008 UNL GRADUATE STUDIES BULLETIN

ANOTHER REMINDER THAT a dynamic version of the 2007-2008 UNL Graduate Studies Bulletin is now available online at <http://bulletin.unl.edu>,

replacing the hard copy bulletin, which is no longer being printed.

Professional Development Network

Events, workshops, tips and strategies to give graduate students a leg up in launching a professional career

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONDING TO ACADEMIC JOB OFFERS

Martin Ford, associate dean of the Graduate School of Education, at George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, offers eleven general principles for responding to academic job offers.

Make sure you have an offer

If it's not from someone authorized to make an offer (e.g., a dean or department head), it's not an offer. If it's not in writing, it is not an offer. Therefore, the appropriate response to an oral "offer" of a job, salary or fringe benefit (e.g., moving expenses, research space, etc.) is to "put it in writing."

Know what you want – and what you don't want

Find out as much as you can about what academic jobs are like: salary, working conditions, work activities, work expectations, and lifestyle considerations. Also find out as much as you can about alternative jobs you may consider. Use this information to determine the boundary conditions of what is possible on these dimensions.

Clearly communicate what you want - but only to the right people

Discussions with potential colleagues and students should be focused primarily on intellectual concerns. Do not discuss salary, or fringe benefits, unless you

are talking to the person who will be making the offer (e.g., the dean or department head). One possible exception - often it is appropriate to communicate some of your non-monetary objectives and concerns to your "host" (typically a member of the Search Committee), especially if they involve getting your work done (e.g., space, equipment, research and teaching assistants - but not salary, moving expenses, or housing assistance).

Always try to use work quality or productivity as the rationale in your negotiations - align your goals with those of your employer

Employers will respect you even if your requests seem excessive if the underlying goal is to do a better job (e.g., seed grants, RA, computer, and a more manageable initial teaching commitment could significantly enhance productivity; a higher salary, moving expenses, or housing assistance could enable you to focus on your job rather than seek extraneous summer or consulting income).

Make requests in an informational rather than controlling manner

Psychological research clearly indicates that people are much more likely to respond positively to feedback (such as a response to a job offer) if they perceive it to be an honest attempt to inform rather

than a manipulative attempt to control behavior or to gain personal resources. This principle is especially applicable to situations involving the negotiation of multiple offers.

Negotiate hard on things that are “out of bounds,” negotiate more gently on things that are “in bounds”

Since a job offer is worthless if there are “fatal flaws” in it that put it “out of bounds,” you should stand firm on requests designed to fix these flaws. On the other hand, you can probably afford to compromise (or even give in) on things that are “in bounds” (i.e., satisfactory but not ideal). Some satisfactory elements of a job offer may become “fatal flaws,” however, if you are negotiating multiple offers.

Learn about the tenure process, but don't get hung up on it

Tenure decisions are too individualized to enable you to use this as a major criterion except in extreme cases. However, make sure you know whether the job being offered is tenure-track, and GET IT IN WRITING. A verbal assurance that a non-tenure-track job will eventually become tenure-track should not be trusted, so get it in writing as well.

Start as high as you can in institutional prestige

You can probably move down the institutional ladder, but it's almost impossible to move up any significant distance. However, keep in mind that at some schools the ratings of one department may exceed, by a considerable degree, the ratings for the school as a whole.

In addition to knowing where a school or department is on the prestige scale, you also want to know which way it is heading. Some schools are clearly making the effort to move up and they are often willing to hire the very best young faculty by making available the necessary resources.

Source:

Tomorrow's Professor, Rick Reis, <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html>. Used with permission.

Get as high a starting salary as you can, but be realistic

A higher starting salary means that future percentage increases will be based on a higher number, thus accelerating your salary at a somewhat faster pace (all else being equal). On the other hand, assistant professor salaries fluctuate only within a very narrow range, so that there's usually not much point in pushing too hard on this component of the job offer.

You don't want to lose a lot of points with the dean by bargaining for an extra \$2,000 to \$3,000 in salary. Remember, what you are really negotiating is the start-up compensation package. Academic year salary is only one part of this. Summer income opportunities, consulting time, support for travel, and housing assistance, all have an impact on your standard of living.

Create options and keep as many open as you can as long as you can

Be an active, engaged job seeker - make sure all of the options you would like to have are explored. Be patient and planful - don't make any decisions you don't have to make unless you are certain that other options are closed or less attractive.

In making a decision, combine logic and emotion

A thorough evaluation of a job offer should combine thoughtful analysis of the degree to which it affords the attainment of desired outcomes AND an appreciation of the fact that emotions are also designed to provide this same kind of evaluative information. If these two kinds of evaluations conflict, you should work hard to try to resolve the discrepancy. In the end you have to trust your gut. If you FEEL really negative about a job, don't take it unless you can resolve why you feel this way.

**APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR NEXT CLASS OF FELLOWS
IN UNL'S PREPARING FUTURE FACULTY PROGRAM**

APPPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED for the next class of Preparing Future Faculty fellows. To participate in the PFF program, you must be an advanced doctoral student at UNL selected by your

department. Contact your department or graduate chair to express your interest in the PFF program and ask to be nominated. Once you've been selected as a fellow, you will be enrolled in the summer seminar

(GRDC 900A, 900B and 900D) and be matched with a PFF mentor.

The PFF program is part of the effort of the Office of Graduate Studies to enrich graduate education at UNL, providing doctoral students with opportunities to observe and experience faculty responsibilities at a variety of academic institutions with varying missions, diverse student bodies and different expectations for faculty.

The first part of the program is a five-week, on-campus summer seminar. The second part takes place over the fall semester, as students make two to four visits to a partner campus in the Lincoln-Omaha area and participate in various mentoring activities. Fellows may opt for a spring mentoring activity at a second campus.

Faculty mentors who participate in the PFF program are paired with participating fellows. After an initial consultation in the fall, fellows and their mentors construct an individual program of activities designed to develop teaching competence, knowledge of the academic profession and an understanding of the partner institution's academic culture. Many PFF students find the mentorship experience to be the most helpful and rewarding aspect of the program, and they often maintain lasting professional relationships with their PFF mentors.

For more information on any aspect of PFF, contact Dr. Laurie Bellows in the Office of Graduate Studies, lbellows1@unl.edu or 402-472-9764 or visit the [PFF Web site](#).

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Graduate Studies has assembled a strategic framework designed to help graduate students prepare for their future faculty roles, professional practice, or careers in business, government and industry. *Taking Charge of Your Professional Development* can be found on the Graduate Studies Web site at <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/takingcharge>.

The framework is based on three guiding principles:

- *Your professional development begins the day you enroll in graduate studies and extends beyond into the early professional years*; therefore, you are encouraged to reflect on your career goals early — and often — to take advantage of professional development opportunities.
- *Professional development involves multiple components*, including instructional development, career, leadership and academic development.
- *Professional development requires collaboration among campus services and resources* to help you develop the knowledge, skills and abilities to pursue a full range of careers.

Graduate student professional development is ultimately about choice and decision-making, determining what is the best path to follow based on your individual needs and goals for the future. The *Taking Charge* framework is constructed so you can identify the skills you need to acquire now in order to prepare for entering the job market once you've completed a graduate degree.

How to Use the *Taking Charge* Framework

Taking Charge is organized around three levels that reflect your experiences as a graduate student as you move in, move through and move out of graduate school, recognizing that milestones may differ depending on fields or disciplines.

Levels

In this framework, each level relates to specific tasks you must negotiate or complete during the graduate experience.

- [*Moving In*](#) — This level encompasses the early graduate experiences that focus primarily on coursework. At this level, you must learn what it takes to succeed in graduate school.
- [*Moving Through*](#) — This level represents the middle of your graduate career and the focus is on developing and demonstrating competence.
- [*Moving On*](#) — The last level focuses on preparing for the transition to professional roles, including completing the thesis and/or dissertation and finding employment.

Categories

At each level, you'll find suggestions for a variety of tasks linked to five general categories that reflect the general skills you need to hit the ground running.

- *Academic Development* — development of skills you need to be successful as a new professional
- *Career Development* — identification of and preparation for the various academic and

nonacademic career paths available to you, including preparation for the job search

- *Instructional Development* — emphasis on general pedagogical training and support services to teaching assistants
- *Leadership Development* — development of the skills you need to become an academic leader, to lead and manage change, and to work with others on projects

- *Engagement/Service* — integration into community-based research and service learning, beyond the traditional notions of outreach and service, emphasizing collaboration with the community and structured opportunities for you to bring your expertise to bear on important community issues

SOLVING A TEACHING PROBLEM

Carnegie Mellon University's Eberle Center for Teaching Excellence seeks to improve the quality of education at Carnegie Mellon by providing teaching support to faculty and graduate students through a research-based approach that involves gathering and analyzing faculty and students' practices and perspectives, applying state-of-the-art research on learning and instruction and conducting original research where gaps in the literature exist.

One feature of the Eberle Center's excellent Web site is its "Solve a Teaching Problem" interactive tool that provides practical strategies to address teaching problems across the disciplines. These strategies are firmly grounded in educational research and learning principles.

Found at <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/index.html>, "Solve a Teaching Problem" is a simple three-step process: 1) identify a problem; 2) identify possible reasons for the problem; and 3) explore strategies to address the problem.

It's easy — simply go the Web site and click the "Go" button to see a list of possible problems you might wish to solve. Choose the problem that best matches your situation: for example, "my students don't participate in discussion." Clicking on that statement

takes you to the next stage of the process, suggesting a number of reasons that may underlie the problem.

Select the reason that best describes your situation, keeping in mind there may be multiple relevant reasons. Perhaps you see the most prominent cause to be that "students do not focus on the relevant aspects of reading." Click on that reason to go to the third stage of the process, to view a number of possible strategies for addressing the problem's underlying cause.

For example, one strategy that might be effective is to "provide strategies for reading." Clicking on that statement leads to a brief description of ways to implement the strategy in your teaching. In this case, the advice is: "Give students tips for reading efficiently and effectively. While all college students have experience reading, they may not have experience reading the types of material you assign, e.g., a journal article, a monograph, a case study. For example, you might encourage students to read the abstract and quickly scan an article before beginning to read, and for monographs to use the table of contents, chapter titles, subheadings, etc., to determine the organizational structure of the book."

Professional Development Services Available from the Office of Graduate Studies

Fall campus-wide workshops for TAs
Institute for International Teaching Assistants
Preparing Future Faculty Program

Professional development workshops
Professional development courses
Teaching Documentation Program
Individual consultation on teaching, careers, job searches

Assistance gathering student feedback
Advice on creating an academic career portfolio
Teaching resource library

Interactions

Personal achievements of graduate students, research reports, teaching successes, calls for collaboration, and student-to-student interaction

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2008 GRADUATE AWARD WINNERS

Kudos to ten individuals honored at a February 6 reception to recognize their outstanding contributions to teaching and research at UNL.

The Lowe R. & Mavis M. Folsom Distinguished Doctoral Dissertation and Master's Thesis Awards

Funded by a generous gift from the Folsom family to the University of Nebraska Foundation, these awards recognize distinguished research accomplishments of doctoral and masters candidates. Nominated dissertations and theses undergo a rigorous, multi-stage review process, and the winning scholarly products must represent an “unusually significant” contribution to the discipline.

This year's recipients of the Folsom Distinguished Dissertation Award are **Dr. Thomas Miller**, biological sciences, and **Dr. Christine Stewart-Nunez**, English. The Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis Award recipient is **Jennifer Huebner**, M.S., food science and technology.

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

The Office of Graduate Studies recognizes the valuable role graduate teaching assistants play in enhancing undergraduate education at UNL. We're very proud of our programs that support the development of cutting-edge pedagogical skills among TAs, and proud also of the efforts of faculty members who mentor and inspire TAs in each department.

The Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award honors graduate students who have demonstrated extraordinary effectiveness in advancing the learning of undergraduate students in their charge. The award is given based on the following criteria: demonstrated excellence based on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness; utilization of innovative teaching techniques; and engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

This year's Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award winners are **Neal Bryan**, agronomy; **Martha Gregg**, mathematics; and **Ezra Zeitler**, geography.

Outstanding Graduate Research Assistant Award

The Outstanding Graduate Research Assistant Award recognizes the extraordinary quality of research and creative activity carried out by UNL graduate students who hold research assistantships. Research mentors nominate selected students; the review criteria includes the centrality of the student's on-going contribution to their research team, the student's demonstrated promise as a researcher, and the originality and significance of the student's own research or creative activity.

This year's recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Research Assistant Award is **Tina Koeppe**, M.A., textiles, clothing and design.

Excellence in Graduate Education Awards

The Excellence in Graduate Education Awards honor faculty members whose dedication to graduate students and commitment to excellence in graduate mentoring have made a significant contribution to graduate education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

This year three faculty members were honored with Excellence in Graduate Education Awards: **Dr. Azzeddine Azzam**, professor, agricultural economics; **Dr. Jordan Soliz**, assistant professor, communication studies; and **Dr. Mark Wilson**, assistant professor, biochemistry.

ELLEN WEISSINGER NAMED DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Ellen Weissinger's appointment as dean of graduate studies was approved by the Board of Regents Jan. 18. A UNL professor of educational psychology, Weissinger had served as executive associate dean of graduate studies since 2002. She succeeds Prem Paul, vice chancellor for research, who is assuming additional responsibilities as vice chancellor for research and economic development.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION NEWS

Come Out and Play

The latest event was basketball, subs and Pepsi at the City Campus Rec Center. We had a great turnout and saw several new faces.

The next events will be Dancing at Sur Tango on Valentine's Day (Feb. 14) followed by a Board Game Night with Pizza on Feb. 25. Feel free to bring a friend along, so that more students become aware of our events. We hope to see you there.

Graduate Student Appreciation Week (GSAW)

GSAW is from Mon., March 31 through Fri., April 4. The tentative list of events is now available on the website: <http://www.unl.edu/gsa/gsaaw.shtml>. We hope to see everyone come out to at least one event to celebrate all graduate students.

March 13: Governor's Proclamation of GSAW

March 18: Graduate Student of the Year
Nominations DUE

March 19: Outstanding Service to Graduate
Students Nominations DUE

March 31: Kickoff Speaker and Root Beer Float
Social

April 1: Networking and Funding Opportunities
(part of the campus-wide Research Fair)

April 2: Workshop for Postdocs and Principal
Investigators: Speaker from the National
Postdoctoral Association (part of the campus-
wide Research Fair)

April 2: Graduate Student Poster Session (part of
the campus-wide Research Fair)

April 3: Grad Student Potluck Dinner and a Movie
at the Culture Center

April 4: Massages; Student vs. Faculty Kickball at
the City Campus Rec; Social at Buzzard Billy's

Initiatives that Affect YOU

GSA has been working on several initiatives that will affect all graduate students at UNL

- Requesting a task force to investigate campus-level travel and research grants
- Delaying the billing cycle for GTAs at the beginning of each semester
- Working with administrators on family-leave, insurance and childcare policies
- Better World Books philanthropy—we'll be collecting books at the end of the semester

T-Shirt Orders

Congratulations to Jabari P. Cain, a graduate student from the teaching, learning and teacher education department, who created the winning GSA logo. We have designed a t-shirt to help identify graduate students at social events and to look cool on campus. The design and more information are on the Web site homepage: <http://www.unl.edu/gsa/>. Please submit orders to gsa@unl.edu by Wednesday, February 13th.



Speak Up

GSA wants to hear from you. What would make being a graduate student at UNL better? Interdisciplinary research? Mixers? Speakers? Workshops? E-mail us with comments, suggestions, concerns & questions: gsa@unl.edu.

For more information about your GSA, go to:
<http://www.unl.edu/gsa>.

Funding Opportunities

A sampling of information on fellowships, scholarships, competitions, and other funding prospects

GRAD STUDIES WEB SITE NOW INCLUDES LINKS TO EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS

THE GRADUATE STUDIES WEB SITE now includes a page with information about more than 600 different external fellowships. The files are organized in table format with fellowship titles, descriptions, deadline dates and Web addresses. You can search

subject areas or view the entire collection in one file. The site can be accessed at www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/funding-external.shtml. For additional fellowship assistance, contact Jane Schneider at jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LABORATORY GRADUATE PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Enables qualified graduate students in the physical, life, social, and environmental sciences, engineering and mathematics to conduct their master's thesis or Ph.D. dissertation research in residence at the DOE facility when the necessary resources are not available on campus. The proposed research program must be acceptable to the university for an advanced degree and meet the programmatic interest of the particular research facility.

Deadline: at least four months prior to starting date
Award amount: annual stipend of \$12,000-\$14,000; annual allowance of \$10,000 for a spouse and one dependent child and \$15,000 for a spouse and two or more dependent children; a maximum of \$3,500 paid to the university for tuition and fees
<http://see.ornl.gov/ProgramDescription.aspx?Program=10044>

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION DISSERTATION GRANTS

ERA invites education policy- and practice-related dissertation proposals using [NCES](#), [NSF](#), and other national data bases. Dissertation grants are available for advanced doctoral students and are intended to support students while they write the doctoral dissertation. Applications are encouraged from a variety of disciplines, such as (but not limited to) education, sociology, economics, psychology, demography, statistics, and psychometrics.

Deadlines: 02/22/08 to be reviewed in March; 08/29/08 to be reviewed in September
Award amounts: up to \$15,000 for one-year projects.
http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/diss_grants/DGFLy.html

RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE: JOSEPH L. FISHER DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS

RFF will award fellowships for the coming academic year in support of doctoral dissertation research on issues related to the environment, natural resources, or energy. RFF's primary research disciplines are economics and other social sciences. Proposals from the physical or biological sciences must have an immediate and obvious link to environmental policy matters.

Deadline: 02/29/08
Award Amount: \$12,000 for the 2007-2008 academic year
http://www.rff.org/rff/About/Fellowships_and_Inter_nships/Fisher/Joseph-L-Fisher-Doctoral-Dissertation-Fellowships.cfm

KENNEDY CENTER INTERNSHIPS

The Kennedy Center selects over 20 college juniors, seniors, graduate students, and recent graduates each semester for full-time internship placements in advertising, development, education, press, programming, production, technology, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Deadline: 03/01/08 for summer 2008 internship

Award amount: weekly stipend of \$225.

<http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/artsmanagement/internships/>

JAMES MADISON MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP FOUNDATION GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS FOR TEACHERS

Fellows receive the opportunity to deepen critical research and writing skills; develop professional ties that can significantly affect their career paths; and strengthen their teaching proficiency in government, history or social studies. Two types of fellowships are offered: Junior Fellowships for students about to complete, or who have completed, their undergraduate course of study and intend to pursue full-time graduate work; Senior Fellowships

for teachers who want to pursue graduate studies on a part-time basis through summer and evening classes.

Deadline: 03/01/08

Award amount: up to \$24,000 for two years, not to exceed \$12,000 per academic year

<http://www.jamesmadison.com/>

SAE INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The SAE Doctoral Scholars Program offers forgivable loans to assist and encourage promising engineering graduate students to pursue careers in teaching engineering at the college level. For each year of qualified teaching after graduation, one year of loans will be forgiven.

Deadline: 04/01/08

Award amount: loans up to \$5,000 per year for up to three years, for a total of \$15,000

<http://students.sae.org/awdscholar/loans/doctoral/>

THE JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP

The American Philosophical Society offers the John Hope Franklin fellowship to support the Ph.D. dissertation projects of minority students of great promise (particularly African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans), as well as other talented students who have a demonstrated commitment to eradicating racial disparities and enlarging minority representation in academia.

The John Hope Franklin Fellow is expected to spend a significant amount of time in residence at the APS Library in Philadelphia and therefore all applicants should be pursuing dissertation topics in which the holdings of the Library are especially strong, such as

quantum mechanics, nuclear physics, computer development, the history of genetics and eugenics, the history of medicine, Early American political and cultural history, 18th and 19th century natural history, the development of cultural anthropology, or American Indian linguistics and culture.

Deadline: 04/01/08

Award amount: \$25,000 for a twelve-month period, plus \$5,000 to support the cost of residency in Philadelphia.

<http://www.amphilsoc.org/grants/johnhopefranklin.htm>

NOTE: UNL's Office of Research sends out weekly announcements of funding opportunities, several of which relate to fellowships in a wide variety of fields of study. If you are interested in receiving these announcements, you can subscribe to the listserv by sending an email to Nathan Meier at nmeier2@unl.edu. Funding announcements archives also are available at: <http://research.unl.edu/sp1/oldfa.shtml>.

Resources for Researchers

Research tips and other information for graduate researchers

NEAR CENTER

Need help with your research, but don't know where to go? Look no further because the Nebraska Evaluation and Research (NEAR) Center is available to help answer your research needs!

The NEAR Center, located in Teachers College, provides assistance in setting up data files; survey or instrument development; review of qualitative interview protocols; training in conducting focus groups, research designs, sampling procedures, and analysis procedures; and consultation regarding the use of qualitative software packages. They also can help perform statistical analyses and interpretation of these analyses and provide guidance regarding qualitative and mixed methods analysis procedures.

NEAR Center consultants don't provide tutoring for classes or consultations related to class projects. Other services **not provided** include: instruction on teaching statistics or measurement, help with course work, proofreading manuscripts, data entry, transcribing interview or focus group data, and formulation or revisions of research questions.

NEAR Center services are free to any graduate student from the College of Education and Human Services. For all other graduate students at UNL, the initial meeting (1 hour) is free, but additional service fees are \$20/hour. You can contact a NEAR Center consultant or go to <http://cehs.unl.edu/near/> to learn more about the NEAR Center.

GRANT WRITING SEMINAR OFFERED BY UNL OFFICE OF RESEARCH ON MARCH 14

The Office of Research is sponsoring "Getting Started as a Successful Grant Writer," a one-day grant writing seminar for graduate students, post doctoral students, research fellows, and pre-tenure and research assistant professors. This seminar will focus primarily on NIH, NSF and USDA proposals and is designed to introduce participants to the proposal writing process and to strategies to make the process easier and more successful.

The session will be held March 14 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Nebraska Champions Club, 707 Stadium Drive (across the street from Memorial Stadium).

There is no charge for participants as long as they are affiliated with a UNL department. Register on line at <http://research.unl.edu/grantseminar.shtml>.

Announcements

News of note for graduate students

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH POSTER COMPETITION

The Office of Research and the Nebraska Chapter of Sigma Xi announce the 2008 Graduate Student Poster Fair to be held Wednesday, April 2, during UNL's annual Research Fair. All graduate disciplines are welcome to participate and all participants will receive constructive feedback from faculty judges in their areas. This is a great opportunity to showcase your work and to grow professionally.

The deadline to register is March 14. Visit <http://researchfair.unl.edu/gsrcac.shtml> for further details and registration information.

Questions may be directed to Britta Osborne, bosborne@unlnotes.unl.edu or 472-0073.

2007 RESEARCH FAIR, APRIL 1-3

The Office of Research invites you to attend the 2008 UNL Research Fair, a three-day event featuring collaboration, creativity, innovation and celebration of achievements. Whether you are a member of the faculty, an undergraduate or a graduate student, you will find opportunities to network with officers from federal agencies and engage colleagues in your current research work and ideas for the future.

Fair dates are April 1, 2, and 3 at the City Campus Union. More information is available at <http://researchfair.unl.edu/>. The schedule will be updated as the Fair dates draw near, so be sure to check periodically for new information.

The 2008 Research Fair is free and open to the public.

CAUTION: FRAUD ALERT

We've had several inquiries about a series of scams going around the country in which fictitious groups with names like "National Scholars Honors Society" claim to award "Latin honors" designations such as *magna cum laude* to graduate

students. These are fraudulent attempts to get money from students. Please disregard such notices. Also, for clarification, UNL **does not** designate Latin honors to graduate students.

LGBTQ READING GROUP SPRING 2008 MEETINGS

The LGBTQ Reading Group meets monthly to read and discuss texts by and about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. All spring meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. at Kopeli's Coffee Shop at 14th and Q, near UNL's city campus.

- January 30th—Reading: June Jordan's *Directed by Desire* & selected essays
- February 27th—Reading: Countee Cullen's *Copper Sun* & Richard Bruce Nugent's "Sadhji," a short story included in Locke's *The New Negro* (1925)

- March 26th—Reading: Selected essays by Adrienne Rich
- April 16th—Reading: Selected pieces from the 1980 anthology *The Coming Out Stories*
- May—TBA

Please contact Kelly Payne, kpayne2@unl.edu, or Madeline Wiseman, madeline@bigred.unl.edu, if you have any questions.

Calendar

Keep connected with the Grad Studies Calendar – important deadlines, dates and dealings you need to know about. For other deadlines related to graduation and degree completion, go to www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 14, Poster Competition Deadline
March 14, Grant Writing Seminar
April 1-3, UNL Research Fair
April 2, Graduate Student Poster Competition

DEGREE DEADLINES

Doctoral Degrees to be conferred May 2008

April 3	Application for final oral exam (or waiver); preliminary copy of dissertation/abstract; incomplete grades removed
April 24	Oral examination
April 25	Dissertation deposit; dissertation grades; final fees; final forms
May 9	Doctoral hooding ceremony
May 10	Commencement

Master's Degrees to be conferred May 2008

March 27	Final examination report form
April 10	Preliminary copy of thesis
April 18	Incomplete grades removed
April 18	Results of written comprehensive exam and/or option II paper
April 24	Oral examination
April 25	Thesis deposit; final examination report form; payment of binding fee
May 10	Commencement

CALENDAR TIP OF THE MONTH

Tara Kuther, writing "Time Management Tips for Graduate Students" for About.com, notes that grad school requires taking a long term perspective on time. Use yearly, monthly and weekly calendars.

Year Scale. It's difficult to keep track of today and remember what needs to be done in six months. Long term deadlines for financial aid, conference submission and grant proposals creep up quickly! Plan at least two years ahead with a yearly calendar, divided into months. Add all long term deadlines on this calendar.

Month Scale. Your monthly calendar should include all paper deadlines, test dates, and appointments so you can plan ahead. Add self-imposed deadlines for completing long term projects like papers.

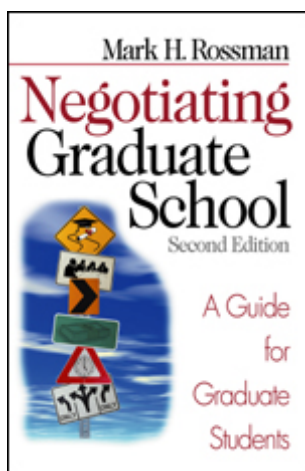
Week Scale. Most academic planners use a weekly scale of measurement. Your weekly calendar includes your day-to-day appointments and deadlines. Have a study group on Thursday afternoon? Record it here. Carry your weekly calendar everywhere.

Readers' Corner

Interesting reading for graduate students

NEGOTIATING GRADUATE SCHOOL: A GUIDE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Mark H. Rossman, 2002, [Sage Publications](http://SagePublications)



To succeed in completing a graduate degree program, graduate students need to be aware and in control of as many aspects of the process as possible, and be skillful, tactful negotiators.

Negotiating Graduate School, Second Edition, describes the process of completing a graduate degree and provides realistic answers to the questions and concerns most often raised by students in graduate school.

Incorporating three decades of personal experience working with master's and doctoral candidates, Rossman addresses such critical issues as the research proposal, forming a committee, preparing for comprehensive written and oral exams, avoiding emotional letdowns, defending the thesis or dissertation and publishing a dissertation.

In addition to addressing the needs of graduate students in traditional settings, this revised edition includes new information responding to the concerns of graduate students in online or distance education programs. It also contains many new URLs and reflects the influence of the Internet on graduate education.